

Hunter Mill News

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Summer/Fall 2003

Letter from Supervisor Hudgins

Thanks again to all who joined me in Reston on March 5 and in Vienna on March 19 for our two community meetings on the Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2004 Budget. I realize that the recent surge in real estate assessments has been difficult for some in the community, most notably for senior citizens living on fixed incomes. As a result, I pushed for the Board of Supervisors to expand the Fairfax County Tax Relief Program for the Elderly and the Disabled.

The program currently offers up to 100% tax relief to seniors with an annual income under \$52,000 and possessing less than \$160,000 in assets (not including the residence and up to an acre of land). Under my plan, the program would have been expanded to offer relief to seniors earning up to \$62,000 and holding up to \$240,000 in assets. My colleagues on the Board instead chose to offer a broad five-cent reduction in the real estate tax rate – a reduction I supported when it became clear that expanding tax relief would not be supported by other Board members.

I think the decision not to expand tax relief is unfortunate for a number of reasons, primarily because some seniors in our community may be forced to sell their homes as a result. In addition, the five-cent reduction required that the Board make nearly \$29 million in reductions beyond the \$22 million in reductions included in the original advertised FY 2004 budget. While I appreciate the need for fiscal prudence in these difficult times, I believe it would have been more appropriate to offer meaningful relief to an additional 3,000 seniors at a relatively small cost of \$6.3 million to the County by expanding the tax relief program. It was important for me to consider that senior homeowners earn an annual median income \$40,000 less than the \$100,000 median of Fairfax County homeowners under 65. Unfortunately, my colleagues on the Board did not share this position.



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Nonetheless, it was vital that we provide some form of relief to homeowners stretched by rising assessments. I am pleased that we were able to reduce the tax rate, though I remain concerned with the effects that the reductions we took will have on our community. I will be vigilant in monitoring these effects. Equally, I am pleased that my colleagues were supportive of my efforts to restore proposed reductions to the Embury Rucker Community Shelter and to the Childcare Assistance and Referral Program. Both seek to build independence among some of our less fortunate neighbors and it is vital to the well-being of our community that this independence be fostered and not become the victim of budget cuts.

This was a very difficult budget year as nearly all forms of revenue other than residential real estate decreased. The County's reliance on real estate taxes as its primary source of revenue has created a significant imbalance. Such an imbalance does not exist in towns like Vienna or cities like Fairfax where the General Assembly has allowed the governments to use a variety of taxes to diversify their revenue base and to limit their reliance on real estate taxes. Only counties in Virginia do not have such authorities granted by the Virginia General Assembly. With the same level of meals, hotel, and cigarette taxes as the Town of Vienna, the Board of Supervisors could have reduced the real estate tax rate by an additional five cents. With taxes like those listed above, non-residents of Fairfax County would also share a much larger portion of the tax burden. Just as Fairfax citizens pay these taxes when they travel to Richmond or Roanoke, so too should their citizens contribute to our community when they travel here. Short of legislative action by the General Assembly, however, the Board of Supervisors will continue to walk the tightrope of balancing service needs and the real estate tax burden.

I am hopeful that our local economy will show improvement in the coming year that will make the budget process less painful. In addition, I will continue to work with our legislative partners in the General Assembly and my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to find solutions for the increasing tax burden on residents. I continue to support tax relief and hope that when, not if, I raise this issue again next year it is met with a warmer reception so that we can keep our seniors in Fairfax County and not continue down an unsustainable path for our neighbors on fixed-incomes.



Catherine M. Hudgins
Supervisor
Hunter Mill District

Mature Operators Driver Improvement Program

Supervisor Hudgins recently spoke to the participants of the Mature Operators' Driver Improvement Program held at the Northern County Governmental Center. Virginia residents age 55 and older were invited to learn about issues that face mature drivers. A certificate was given at the end of the course which can be used for insurance reduction. The program is sponsored by the Fairfax County Police Department and the Reston Hospital Center, in partnership with the Hunter Mill Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) Group.



Transportation

Route 7 Public Hearings—VDOT recently held a Design Public Hearing on the western section of Route 7 from Rolling Holly Drive to Reston Parkway. Citizens had the opportunity to provide input on the design before the project moves forward. In addition, citizens had the opportunity to come and see the preliminary plans for the proposed six-lane widening of Route 7 and to find out about the proposed improvements, property impacts, and relocation assistance. Land acquisition is fully funded, but only partial funding is available for construction. More information can be found on VDOT's website at: <http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/nova/fairfax-rt7-default.asp>.

Automatic Pedestrian WALK Lights Along Reston Parkway—In a joint effort by Supervisor Hudgins, the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, and VDOT, pedestrian signals are now coordinated and timed with the traffic signals on Reston Parkway from Baron Cameron Avenue to Lawyers Road. This is the first such pedestrian and traffic signal coordination project in Fairfax County. As the traffic signal turns green on Reston Parkway, the pedestrian signals at the intersections of Reston Parkway will automatically turn to walk. This will allow for a greater length in time to cross the street and is an effort to address pedestrian safety.

W&OD Trail Connection at Reston Town Center Bus Transfer Station—The current bus transfer station on Explorer Street will soon find a permanent home. A new site will be constructed on the south side of Bluemont Way, adjacent to the new Sallie Mae property. As part of the Reston Town Center proffers, the bus transfer site was donated to the County by Terrabrook. In addition, a much needed connection to the W&OD Trail will also be built. The trail connection will allow bike commuters and others direct access to the transfer station. It will be located across from Discovery Street. The transfer station is expected to be completed by the end of 2004.

Bike to Work Day 2003 a Great Success—On Friday, May 2, Supervisor Hudgins visited with local bike commuters at two Fairfax County Bike to Work Day rest stops—at Whole Foods in Vienna and at Reston Town Center. Both stops were swarming with bikers doing their part to relieve congestion on our roads. One biker had traveled from Fairfax to Vienna on her way to work on Capitol Hill. Another biker in Reston was making a shorter trip from Reston to his office in Herndon. Supervisor Hudgins would like to thank all the citizens of the Hunter Mill District and Fairfax County who made the second annual Bike to Work Day a rousing success. These folks helped all of us by putting fewer cars on the road while we were stuck fending off traffic.

Parks

Stratton Woods Park—Supervisor Hudgins and the Fairfax County Park Authority held a groundbreaking ceremony for Stratton Woods Park at 2449 Fox Mill Road in Herndon on Saturday, April 12. This is a significant and long awaited park development project for the community.

This park will include one 60' diamond field, one 90' diamond field, a 200' x 350' rectangular field, tennis courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, and a playground. A picnic area with five tables and three grills will also be available. An asphalt trail will connect most of the facilities, including one of the tables and grills.

Completion is scheduled for December 2003. For more information, see the master plan at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gmpstratframe.htm>.

Waters and Caffi Fields—As a result of a partnership between the Vienna youth and adult sports programs, Fairfax County, and the Town of Vienna, new improved lighting has been installed at Waters and Caffi ball fields. The Park Authority contributed \$70K and the Department of Community and Recreation Services contributed \$99K toward the installation of the lights.

Constituent Survey Results

One hundred and fifty-five residents filled out the survey that was included in the last Hunter Mill District newsletter and mailed back their opinions. While this is a small percentage of all Hunter Mill residents, it is an important way for Supervisor Hudgins to seek the community's guidance in making policy decisions.

Respondents listed spending more on rail and public transportation as the most important priority and spending on telecommuting as the least important. However, only a small investment is required to make telecommuting a very effective way to reduce traffic congestion. Nearly half the respondents reported using public transportation (70) and a large number said that they commute by bicycle (35). Respondents did not think that lower fares on Fairfax Connector were important (11), but they wanted more information about existing routes and fares (38).

These are just a few highlights from the survey. The entire survey results can be found online on the Hunter Mill District web site at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/huntermill>.

Fairfax Connector Selected One of *Metro Magazine's* Ten Most Improved Transit Systems

The May 2003 issue of *Metro Magazine*, a publication that covers transit issues, has recognized Fairfax Connector as one of the Ten Most Improved transit systems in the country. The Connector surpassed their Fiscal Year 2002 goals of increasing ridership by 4.76 percent and reducing adverse customer comments by 21.9 percent from 41 to 32 per 100,000 riders. Ridership on the Fairfax Connector Bus System in Fiscal Year 2002 was 6,831,313 passengers, an increase of 11.8 percent over Fiscal Year 2001 ridership. In addition, adverse customer comments decreased by 26.8 percent to 30 per 100,000 riders.

A number of improvements in customer service were made to the bus system to achieve this new level of customer satisfaction. They began by addressing top concerns revealed in customer survey results. After learning that reliability of service was a concern, FAIRFAX CONNECTOR hired a new contractor to operate the routes with persistent problems. They also replaced 57 of the fleet's 136 buses, resulting in an average age of 5 years for the fleet. They created a web site to make bus route information more easily accessible and added a "Connector Host" to help transferring riders find their connections during rush hour.

Supervisor Hudgins & Dulles Corridor Rail Association Host Community Meeting on Dulles Rail



On June 5, Supervisor Hudgins and the Dulles Corridor Rail Association hosted a community meeting with Karen Rae, Director, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. Ms. Rae updated the community on the Dulles Rail project and attendees had the opportunity to comment and ask questions on the status of the project. In addition, the County Department of Transportation provided an update on improvements in the Dulles Corridor and on the Reston Transit Center, while the County's Economic Development Authority provided an update on the local economy in the Dulles Corridor.

Supervisor Hudgins Receives Award from Regional Bicycle Group

At its annual meeting on April 3, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association honored Supervisor Hudgins for promoting bicycling to work and improved bicycling facilities. Supervisor Hudgins was the force behind the first Bike to Work Day rally in Fairfax County, held at Reston Town Center in 2002. She also led efforts to bring signs to the Hunter Mill District roadways that require motorists to yield to the right-of-way of cyclists and pedestrians in crosswalks.

According to Supervisor Hudgins, "Alternate modes of transportation like biking are not only beneficial to the riders themselves, but to the rest of us who benefit from reduced congestion and air pollution. As Fairfax County and the rest of the metropolitan region contend with an imposing air quality problem, we continue to look 'outside the box' for solutions that will mean a safer and healthier environment for future generations. Bicycle commuting is one such solution."

Plaza America Proffers

On December 13, 2002, the developers of Plaza America contributed a \$1.8 million proffer for pedestrian and public transportation enhancements along Sunset Hills Road. Since the dedication of the proffers, the Hunter Mill District office and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation have been reviewing recommendations from citizens and from County staff. The goal has been to use the proffer to improve pedestrian safety and access and to increase transit ridership. The following projects will be funded by the proffer:

- A continuous pedestrian walkway from the Town of Herndon (at the Fairfax County Parkway) to Wiehle Avenue on the south side of Sunset Hills Road;
- A continuous pedestrian walkway from the Town of Herndon (at the Fairfax County Parkway) to Reston Parkway on the north side of Sunset Hills Road;
- Completion of crosswalks and pedestrian signals at priority transit/pedestrian location as identified on the "Reston on Foot" plan;
- Installation of pedestrian signals at signalized intersections where none exist;
- Bus shelters or pads at existing bus stops without shelters or pads and the inclusion of system maps and timetables at all bus shelters on Sunset Hills Road;
- Minor aesthetic and pedestrian improvements to the North Reston Park and Ride Lot;
- Increasing the Fairfax Connector 505 route from 30 minute headways to 15 minute headways during the midday service;
- Completion of a trail connection from Dressage Drive to the Lake Fairfax Business Park.

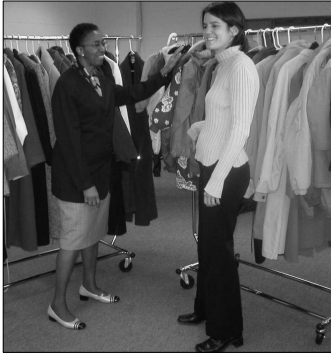
"These proffer dollars were targeted to improve the public transportation network in the area surrounding Plaza America and along Sunset Hills Road. The success of this effort marks not only the improvement of transportation in this specific area of Reston, but is indicative of efforts that need to be made around Reston and throughout Fairfax County. By creating a comprehensive public transportation network that includes bus shelters, crosswalks, and frequent and dependable bus services, among other things, we can prepare ourselves for the advent of rail in the Dulles Corridor," noted Supervisor Hudgins.

2003 Land Use Applications

The status of all approved and pending land use applications in the Hunter Mill District in 2003 is available on the Hunter Mill District website at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/huntermill/landuse/lu2003.html>.

Winter Coat Closet

Most of us in the Hunter Mill District cannot relate to being without a coat during the winter months. In early December 2003, two men



stopped into the Hunter Mill District Office asking where they could find winter coats. The weather was unseasonably cold and they had

been to several charities looking for warm winter coats without success. Supervisor Hudgins recognized the critical need and called Reston Interfaith to see if a partnership could be arranged to provide coats for community members in need.

As a result, more than 600 coats were given out with no questions asked. Reston Interfaith volunteers donated over 100 hours, more than 100 citizens contributed wearable and warm coats, and the community room in the North County Governmental Center served as the coat closet. A special thanks is in order to the members of our community who opened their closets and their warm hearts. Because of them, many individuals and families were warm during one of the snowiest winters in Fairfax County history.

Hunter Mill District Outdoor Lighting Task Force

The Hunter Mill District Outdoor Lighting Task Force continues to meet to examine issues of lighting in the Hunter Mill District and countywide. On April 3 they took their work on the road as they rented a bus and analyzed different lighting styles in and around Reston. Local developer Chris Walker, Reston founder Bob Simon, and representatives from the Reston Association came along as the group examined current lighting in Reston and discussed its history. Copies of the tour route are available on the Hunter Mill District web site (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/huntermill).

On May 1, task force chairman Bill Burton spoke at the Planning Commission in favor of a zoning ordinance amendment that would regulate non-streetlight outdoor lighting in Fairfax County. The County's standards were last updated in 1978 and are in need of reworking. Among other things, the regulations in the proposed amendment would require retail businesses to extinguish half their lights after the close of business and would require that lighting plans be submitted for lighting athletic fields to ensure efficiency and a reduction of glare. In addition, nearly all outdoor lights will be required to use cutoff fixtures, thus limiting the emission of glare onto neighboring properties. The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to make a decision on the proposed changes on June 16.

Anyone interested in working on the task force should contact Chris DelGrosso in Supervisor Hudgins office at 703-478-0283.



Participants in the street lighting tour from L to R: Robert Simon, Sarah Cox, Jenn Blackwell, Felix Bermejo, Hale Ament, and Bill Burton

The Reston Relay for Life

How can you build upon a rousing success? That question was answered on May 31 and June 1, 2003, at South Lakes High School when hundreds of people participated and approximately \$460,000 were raised to fight cancer. The Hunter Mill District Steppers, led by Supervisor Hudgins, joined in the walk to raise funds to combat this awful disease that has touched so many lives. The Steppers raised over \$2200. Thanks are owed to all who participated. Their contribution will help us win the fight against cancer.

Supervisor Hudgins Secures School Site and Park Expansion as Part of Herndon Rezoning

On Supervisor Hudgins' motion on April 7, 2003, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved applications to rezone -- from commercial/industrial to residential -- a portion of property along Coppermine Road in Herndon. The residential community will consist of single family attached units near the intersection of Coppermine and Centreville Roads and the rezoning allows the option for multi-family or single family attached units near the intersection of Coppermine and Horse Pen Roads.

Supervisor Hudgins worked closely with the community and the two developers, Coppermine Associates LLC and Dulles Tech LC, to secure a 14.38 acre elementary school site for Fairfax County Public Schools. In addition, approximately 12.9 acres of land shall be conveyed to Fairfax County as an expansion of the Merrybrook Run Stream Valley Park. The park shall become a wonderful asset for the community with trails and other forms of passive recreation.

"I commend Coppermine Associates and Dulles Tech for their willingness to work with the community and reach an agreement that mitigates the effects of their development. I am excited that we were able to find a new school site that will contribute to relieving overcrowded classrooms in the McNair/Floris area. I look forward to the positive effects the school will have not only for the new communities, but for the school communities that surround them," noted Supervisor Hudgins.

Housing Issues

It has been a very productive year so far for affordable housing advocates in the Hunter Mill District. Plans continue to move forward for the redevelopment of the Island Walk Cooperative in Reston while the Board of Supervisors recently approved the allocation of federal funding for the Coppermine Place development for seniors and the disabled in Herndon.

In addition, the recommendations of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Task Force, chaired by Supervisor Hudgins, were approved at the May 19 Board of Supervisors meeting. The changes to the Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance will ensure that affordable units are included in mid-rise apartment complexes. Up until now, mid- and high-rise developments have been exempt from the ADU ordinance. While the current changes only apply to mid-rise developments, Supervisor Hudgins moved and the Board approved a reconvening of the ADU Task Force to look at options for compelling developers to include affordable units in high-rise structures. Both actions represent an important step forward as ever-growing Fairfax County seeks to remedy a severe shortage of housing for its diverse workforce.



Above: Dee Cotton, president of the Island Walk Board of Directors, signs the purchase and sale agreement for major renovations at Island Walk.

Extended Office Hours - 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

North County Governmental Center, 12000 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston: October 8, and November 12.

Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna: October 22, and November 19.

How to Connect with Your Hunter Mill District Office

- **Call** us at 703-478-0283.
Our TTY number is 703-736-4460.
- **Fax** us at 703-471-6847.
- **Write** to:
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- **Email** us at:
hntmill@fairfaxcounty.gov
- **Watch** "Connecting with Supervisor Hudgins" on Comcast's Channel 28 on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. and on Channel 16 on Sundays and Fridays at 4 p.m., Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.
- **Meet** Supervisor Hudgins at extended evening office hours. See page 7 for further information.

South Lakes High School Political Science Interns Serve the Hunter Mill Office

The Hunter Mill District office has partnered successfully for the past three years with South Lakes High School's Political Science Department to bring interns into the office. Interns from South Lakes have answered telephones, helped with typing, and completed many vital tasks in the day-to-day routine of government work. The Hunter Mill District Office wishes to extend a special thanks to the political science department and to our current intern Sara Parker for lightening the workload in our office. Students interested in serving as interns are invited to contact the Hunter Mill District office at 703-478-0283.

Langston Hughes International Baccalaureate

Congratulations are in order for Langston Hughes Middle School as it recently was granted status as a Middle Years International Baccalaureate (IB) school. The middle years program runs from seventh through tenth grade and will be operated as a partnership between Langston Hughes and South Lakes High School. Supervisor Hudgins was on hand for their celebration on April 3 and looks forward to even more great things from these two Reston gems.

Congratulations Girl Scouts

Congratulations to these Girl Scouts who recently received the Gold Award: Erin Poppe, Maureen Thompson, and Lindsay Gillam.

Congratulations Eagle Scouts

Congratulations to the following Boy Scouts who recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout: Jared A. Anderson, Joseph W. Coffinberger, Mike Dreyfuss, William K. Hafker, Nicholas S. Ilchyshyn, Matt Kary, Michael S. Olson, Stepan S. Paul, Adam Robbins, Eric Rosner, Daniel A. Sohinki, and Benjamin Verley.



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